

State Senator · Irma Clark-Coleman

Serving the 3rd District Constituents in Dearborn & River Rouge

Budget Update: Process Improves Over Last Year

At this writing, the FY 2008-09 budget process is underway and Lansing is hopeful that it will be resolved by early summer. Lawmakers on both sides of the aisle want to avoid the shameful display of partisanship that stalled our state government for weeks and resulted in a brief shutdown last October.

This year we continue to be mindful of protecting programs that provide essential services to our most vulnerable citizens. The budget is currently in the process of being developed. The first step has been completed, with the Senate passing the following budgets:

- **Community Colleges** statewide received a 3% overall increase. The budget includes reserved funding recommendations for nursing programs.
- The **Community Health** budget is \$6 million less than the Governor's overall recommendation. Funding was reduced for the Healthy Michigan Fund, mental health courts, Medicaid coverage for 19- and 20-year olds, home-based care programs and efforts to combat STDs and resistant staph infections. *Every Senate Democrat voted against this budget bill because of proposed cuts to the needy.*

- The **Corrections** budget matches the Governor's recommendation. It reduces funding for central office operations by 22%, reduces beds at seven facilities and closes the Scott Correctional Facility.
- **K-12** funding was increased by \$71 per student. Districts with the lowest per pupil spending will receive an increase of \$142 per student. About \$20 million in funding for declining enrollment schools was restored to current-year levels. Sen. Clark-Coleman introduced an amendment to increase early childhood education by \$24 million along with an amendment to create a small high schools plan (\$32 million) but her amendments were not adopted by a majority.
- The **Higher Education** budget includes a 3% across-the-board increase for all state universities.
- The next step in the process is for the House to do its work with the results of both chambers moving to Conference Committee for final determination. Again, we are hopeful that a compromise will be reached that will retain these proposed increases.

How to Contact Me

Lansing Office

P.O. Box 30036
Lansing, MI 48909-7536
Toll-Free: 1-866-747-7803
Phone: 517-373-0990
Fax: 517-373-5338

New Address Dearborn Office

15250 Mercantile Drive
Dearborn, MI 48120-1207
Phone: 313-271-2688
Fax: 313-271-2632

Office Hours

Monday & Friday, 1-5 pm

E-mail

seniclark-coleman@
senate.michigan.gov

Website

www.senate.mi.gov/
clark-coleman

What Our Local Institutions of Higher Learning Stand to Gain:

(includes State matching funds)



- Wayne State University – \$7.8 million to construct bio-medical research building
- University of Michigan – Dearborn – \$54 million to build science building
- Henry Ford Community College – \$15 million to complete science building renovations
- Wayne County Community College District – \$42 million to acquire instructional facility in northwest Detroit



Dear Constituents,

As we embark on another budget year, I am hopeful that all legislators will work together to move our state forward. Both leaders of the state Senate and House have agreed to move wisely but expeditiously.

We are in a better financial position than we were last year at this time. While we may have a few dollars to put away in our “rainy day” fund, we must still be ever so careful to watch how we spend our dollars.

While lawmakers are minding the state’s bottom line, we are also aware of the housing crisis that has so many of our residents losing or about to lose their homes. That is why both Democrats and Republicans joined together to pass a group of bills that allows the Michigan State Housing Development Authority to help homeowners with Adjustable Rate Mortgages transfer to 30-year fixed-rate loans and aid those who have fixed-rate loans get more affordable interest rates. In all, your lawmakers are working for you.

I have enjoyed speaking with each of you at events in our District. Your support makes it possible for me to offer bills to mandate Kindergarten instruction and attendance and to give financial aid to those who take care of their minor-age relatives. Together, we can make Michigan work for us all.

Sincerely,

Irma Clark-Coleman

State Senator • 3rd District

Sen. Clark-Coleman Protects Seniors

Sen. Clark-Coleman and the Senate Democrats introduced a ten-bill package this month designed to protect senior citizens from predators. Called “Safeguard Our Seniors,” the bills increase penalties for violators and provide prosecutors with additional tools to take legal action against them.

The legislative action helped kick off “Older Americans Awareness Month” and is based on recommendations made by Governor Jennifer Granholm’s Task Force on Elder Abuse. Sen. Clark-Coleman’s portion of the package gives seniors more protections against ill-advised purchases of variable annuity insurance contracts.

“There is no greater criminal than those who prey on our most vulnerable citizens, our children and seniors,” said Sen. Clark-Coleman. “These new bills send a strong message that this behavior will not be tolerated, and that the severity of punishment will equal the vile nature of crimes against defenseless seniors.”

Kinship financial Aid Package Moves in Senate

It looks like people who take care of their minor-age relatives will finally get financial relief. Sen. Clark-Coleman’s legislation, Senate Bill 170, which gives relative caregivers the same financial payments as foster parents, was recently approved by a Senate committee and is expected to be passed by the full Senate soon.

After six years of Sen. Clark-Coleman’s advocacy, Senate leaders have realized that non-traditional families can be found all around this state, not just in inner-city households.

From the UP to Monroe and from Grand Rapids to Port Huron, more grandparents are taking on the responsibility of rearing their grandchildren because of parental death, drug use, mental illness, or military activity.

“It does not matter their race, financial status or even political leanings. They all need our help to sustain their families and keep them together,” Sen. Clark-Coleman said.

There is nearly \$5 million in the budget to place children in

permanent homes with relatives who love them.

While this isn’t enough to move all 16,000 children from state care into homes with their relatives, it’s enough to begin to chip away at a system that has grown out of control.

Gov. Granholm has made it a priority to move children from foster care to permanent homes. Sen. Clark-Coleman is working closely with the Department of Human Services to make sure it happens on her watch.

Senator Clark-Coleman Receives Collegiate Honor



Dr. Gail Mee, President of HFCC, presents Senator Clark-Coleman with the Distinguished Service Award.

Henry Ford Community College recently presented Sen. Clark-Coleman with the prestigious *Distinguished Service Award* before hundreds of graduates and their families at the college’s annual commencement ceremony held at the Ford Performing Arts Center in Dearborn.

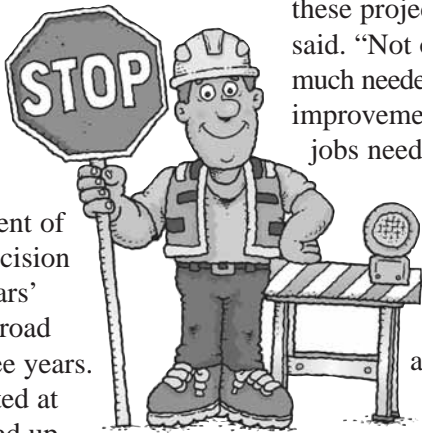
“I am humbled by Henry Ford Community College’s generosity,” Sen. Clark-Coleman said. “I work tirelessly to bring a continued stream of funding to HFCC, UM – Dearborn, WSU and WCCCD. I believe that investment in education will lead Michigan to higher ground.”

Sen. Clark-Coleman was selected for the award “in recognition of the significant service provided to the college and community,” wrote Lisa M. Masi, HFCC’s Records, Degree Audit and Commencement Manager, in a letter to the Senator.

Dearborn Gets Early Road Projects

Sen. Clark-Coleman is pleased to announce that Dearborn will benefit from the Michigan Department of Transportation's decision to accelerate 10 years' worth of projected road construction to three years.

"I am delighted at the decision to speed up



these projects," Sen. Clark-Coleman said. "Not only are we undertaking much needed infrastructure improvements but we are creating jobs needed to get them done."

In September, work is scheduled to begin on the Evergreen Rd./Ford Rd. interchange. Replacement of bridges and ramps on the east half of the interchange is expected to be

completed by December. Repairs to bridges and ramps on the west half of the exchange are expected to be finished by mid 2009.

The road project acceleration, which was announced during the Governor's State of the State address, is a part of the Jobs Today program intended to create jobs and strengthen the state's infrastructure.

Summer fun With Less Gas

Pure Michigan, Michigan's official travel and tourism website, encourages residents to tour the beautiful sites and scenes around the state this summer. While rising gas prices have put many family vacations in jeopardy and cancelled many others, travel officials have identified many trips the whole family can enjoy that take only one tank of gas.

In southeast Michigan, the site

recommends Detroit. There, families can visit Eastern Market, Belle Isle Park, Detroit Institute of Arts, Hitsville – the Motown Museum, and The Henry Ford, among others. In neighboring Ypsilanti, the site's writers suggest visiting the Ypsilanti Automotive Heritage Museum and, in Jackson, the Ella Sharp Museum.

What may be new to a number of Michigan residents is Michigan's

burgeoning wine industry, which includes members of the Southeast Michigan Pioneer Wine Trail with 10 locations for tasting their fruit of the vine. One of the newest wineries, Cherry Creek Cellars in Albion, is just ten miles from the historic town of Marshall.

For more money-saving traveling tips, call toll-free (800) 644-2489 or go to www.michigan.org/things-to-do.



Sen. Clark-Coleman reads to students at Dearborn Geer Park Elementary School in celebration of National Reading Month. Sen. Clark-Coleman was invited by Principal Andrea Awada.



Sen. Clark-Coleman and her Chief of Staff, Gary Pollard, welcome Dearborn community leaders to the State Capitol: Dinah Anya (2nd from left), Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Services, and Wali Altahif (far right), Arab American and Chaldean Council.



Sen. Clark-Coleman poses with First Grade Teacher Ms. Walsh and her students at River Rouge's Walter F. White Elementary School. The Senator read to the students in celebration of National Reading Month.



Sen. Clark-Coleman congratulates Kathryn Savoie (left) as she was honored in Lansing for her contributions to the Dearborn community. Ms. Savoie's daughter (center) joined her mother for the celebration.



State Senator Irma Clark-Coleman

P.O. Box 30036
Lansing, MI 48909-7536



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Clark-Coleman Supports House Budget

Senator Clark-Coleman recently joined State Representatives Gino Polidori and Morris Hood, III in announcing \$51 million in renovation projects at Henry Ford Community College and the University of Michigan – Dearborn.

The Michigan House of Representatives approved capital outlay projects at public institutions and facilities across Michigan; however, the State Senate rejected the measure, forcing the issue to a conference committee.

Sen. Clark-Coleman vowed to continue to fight for the funding that many believe will be restored in the final budget. “I will follow the lead of my colleagues in the House and will diligently work to ensure final passage of the bill,” Sen. Clark-Coleman said.



Sen. Clark-Coleman joins State Representatives Gino Polidori (left) and Morris Hood, III (center) to announce the Capitol Outlay budget recently passed by the State House of Representatives. She vowed to fight for passage of the budget in the State Senate.

Booster Seat Law Enacted

Beginning July 1, 2008, children between the ages of four and eight and less than 4 feet 9 inches tall will have to sit in booster seats while riding in automobiles. Current law requires children under age four to ride in an infant or child car seat. The new law extends the requirement to include

older children who also are not optimally protected by seat belts alone.

According to the Partners for Child Passenger Safety, risk of injury for a 4- to 8-year-old child is reduced by 59 percent when using a car seat or booster seat. A recent study by the group also found that children in seat

belts alone are four times more likely to suffer head/brain injuries as compared to those in booster seats.

The Legislature is considering a bill that will make it possible to provide free booster seats to low-income families.



Sen. Clark-Coleman and her Chief of Staff, Gary Pollard, pose on the Senate Floor with John McDonald (far right), President, HFCC Teachers Local #1650, Linda Brandt (2nd left), HFCC Science Department, and Jennifer Roderique (center), HFCC English Department.

E-News Report



The Clark-Coleman E-News Report is up and running and we would love for you to be a part of it. To subscribe, please send your e-mail address to seniclarkcoleman@senate.michigan.gov and write “e-news add” in the subject line. You can check out the

Senator’s latest activities in Lansing and in the District by visiting her Senate website at www.senate.mi.gov/clark-coleman.